

## Task Force Interim Findings

On the basis of the ten public input meetings held throughout the state, comments received from interested parties and the presentations and information received by the Task Force and its committees, and notwithstanding the substantial work yet to be completed, the Task Force has developed a series of interim findings.

*This newsletter focuses on the findings of the Interim Report delivered to Governor Hull in December, 1999.*

- ▼ There is a clear need to develop an integrated, comprehensive, multi-modal transportation plan for Arizona. Such a plan must include all modes of transportation including roads, rail, transit, highways, air, bicycles, pedestrians, freight as well as alternatives to the traditional means of transportation including travel reduction programs, pipelines, electronic transmissions, and telecommunications.
- ▼ The Task Force recognizes that there are undoubtedly insufficient existing revenues to complete existing transportation programs. It is however, unable at this time to specifically quantify the shortfall due to the differences in methodologies among the various existing transportation needs studies, many of which are fiscally constrained (as required by federal law). Sometimes these constraints result in inconsistent input assumptions, incomplete data and the inherent difficulties in projecting transportation revenues into the extended future. It is evident that the shortfall is clearly in the tens of billions of dollars.
- ▼ Until a comprehensive, multi-modal transportation vision plan is developed by the Task Force, these calculations should be viewed as estimates, albeit meaningful. However, it is at least clear that reasonable estimates of transportation needs in Arizona for the next 20 years substantially exceed projected, currently dedicated transportation revenue sources.
- ▼ The State of Arizona has experienced tremendous population and economic growth over the past half century. The state has grown from 750 thousand people in 1950 to almost 5 million in 2000. Its growth is projected to continue into the next century growing to 7.4 million by 2020 (according to DES). This growth places enormous burdens on our state's transportation system. An effective, reliable, and well-maintained transportation system is essential to serve and shape this growth and to facilitate economic development. Any long-range transportation plan must recognize and carefully consider these population changes.
- ▼ While there are ongoing efforts by all of the governmental participants in Arizona's transportation system to streamline the transportation planning and programming process, the Task Force has found limited coordination or standardization among the jurisdictions and a lack of coordination within jurisdictional boundaries. Currently available information varies widely by jurisdiction making any statewide

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## Task Force Interim Findings (continued)

analysis virtually impossible. A careful review of the current organizational structures must be undertaken to address these circumstances.

- ▼ To develop a responsive, credible and supportable plan, it is essential that the Task Force have accurate, timely, standardized assessments of the current transportation system and projected transportation needs throughout the state.

- ▼ Future long-range planning efforts would be greatly facilitated by:

1. Complete, consistent and reliable information concerning the needs, costs, revenue and performance of the transportation system at all levels, for all regions and for all modes;

2. Standardization of information and data across all jurisdictions within the state for various purposes including: planning, project prioritization, performance reporting and development of each jurisdiction's short-term and long-range transportation plans;

3. Improved coordination among governmental agencies and elected officials at all levels including the state (ADOT and the State Transportation Board), tribal governments, regional entities and local governments; and

4. Greater technical assistance from the state to the Councils of Government and other regional planning entities.

- ▼ Public testimony from across the state, indicates that 1) basic maintenance of existing facilities is not being funded at necessary

levels, leading to even more costly reconstruction once failure occurs, and 2) there is a clear need for increased revenues for transportation purposes throughout the state.

- ▼ There is significant frustration, at all levels, resulting from the length of time required to complete identified, major transportation improvements ranging from design concept to final construction. For example, it can take up to 15 years to plan, program and fund the widening of one stretch of state highway to four lanes.

- ▼ Increasing local and commercial traffic has fostered demand for bypass routes in both urban and rural communities. The complex issues associated with these bypass routes, include coordination among various jurisdictions and funding sources, evaluating potential alignments, impacts to existing businesses, zoning considerations and environmental impacts and costs.

- ▼ Public testimony throughout the state by local elected officials and local administrators support the allocation of all of the Flight Property Tax to the State Aviation Fund.

- ▼ Many transportation concerns are common to both urban and rural communities including growing congestion, time delays and safety. There are some unique transportation needs in rural and tribal communities. Among important issues to rural communities are increased demand for para-transit services (dial-a-ride or jitneys); and growing congestion on state highways and major arterial streets through rural communities. In addition, increasing commercial traffic has heightened the need or interest in constructing bypass routes.

▼ Proper growth management has received significant attention at both the state and local levels. Transportation planning and development are integrally related to any effective growth management plan. State and regional transportation plans should reflect growth management strategies.

▼ In addition, any growth management proposal should:

1. Incorporate state and regional transportation system plans in comprehensive local plans (as transportation plans should reflect local plans);

2. Preserve existing or future transportation corridor alignments and rights-of-way; airport clear zones, and recognize land issues with regard to airport noise contours and

3. Carefully consider the negative impacts on existing or future transportation systems or corridors when considering "in-fill incentives" or "permissive service area boundaries."

▼ It is readily apparent that policy-makers must prioritize transportation expenditures, ensure efficient use of all available resources (including existing system assets) and be willing to pool resources to effectively meet basic long-range system needs.

▼ The work of the Task Force has demonstrated the need to perform comprehensive multi-modal transportation needs assessments in the future. These assessments should use a standardized, approved methodology. This standardization would: establish consistency between each assessment study; enhance reliability of data collection;

ensure compatibility with other jurisdictional assessments; and provide an invaluable and more reliable tool to state transportation planners and state and local policy-makers.

## Future Actions

The Task Force has determined that additional information is essential to complete its responsibilities. Therefore, in the coming year, the Task Force will be gathering additional data and information concerning the current operations of the transportation system within Arizona as well as information concerning alternative approaches that should be considered in developing a comprehensive multi-modal state-wide transportation system.

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*A full copy of the Interim Report is available on the Task Force web site or from the Vision 21 Administrative Coordinator.*

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Finally, following its deliberations and analysis, the Task Force will develop *draft findings and preliminary recommendations*. These findings and recommendations will be based on 1) the information and public input gathered by the Task Force, 2) its analysis and study of costs and funding alternatives of various components of a multi-modal transportation system and 3) its review and analysis of the transportation system structure.

The *draft findings and preliminary recommendations* of the Task Force will be broadly disseminated and thoroughly discussed in a series of public meetings to be scheduled throughout the state.

On the basis of those *draft findings and preliminary recommendations* as well as the additional public input, the Task Force will develop final, consensus findings and recommendations for inclusion in its Final Report to the Governor by December 31, 2000.

